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KT photo | **Tim Bath**

House of Burgess: Trump himself the leaker of info

President admits giving Israeli intelligence to Russians

By Rob Burgess
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Once again, the space allotted couldn't possibly do justice to the past week, but here goes.

As I wrote in last week's column, "Trump's 'Tuesday Night Massacre,'" President Donald Trump abruptly fired FBI Director James Comey May 9. The termination letter based the firing on the recommendation of Attorney General Jeff Sessions and Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein.

Trump immediately refuted explanations by Vice President Mike Pence, Principal Deputy White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders and Press Secretary Sean Spicer, citing Comey's mishandling of Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton's investigation. Trump repeatedly admitted Comey's Russian election meddling investigation was the true reason.

Trump then threatened Comey on Twitter, insinuating the existence of Nixonian Oval Office recordings.

"Trump called Comey weeks after he took office and asked him when federal authorities were going to put out word that Trump was not personally under investigation," reported The New York Times' Michael S. Schmidt a week ago today. Comey has agreed to testify before the Senate Intelligence Committee after Memorial Day.

Monday, it was revealed Comey wasn't the only one reporting Trump's attempts at interference. "Trump made separate appeals to the director of national intelligence, Daniel Coats, and to Adm. Michael S. Rogers, the director of the National Security Agency, urging them to publicly deny the existence of any evidence of collusion during the 2016 election," reported The Washington Post's Adam Entous and Ellen Nakashima.

Even after Rosenstein hired former FBI Director Robert Mueller as special counsel May 17, the administration began exploring avenues of

compromise. “The White House began reviewing the Code of Federal Regulations, which restricts newly hired government lawyers from investigating their prior law firm’s clients for one year after their hiring, the sources said,” reported Reuters. “Mueller’s former law firm, WilmerHale, represents Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner ... and the president’s former campaign manager Paul Manafort.” (The Department of Justice cleared Mueller to begin work Tuesday.)

Just before Comey’s firing, federal prosecutors issued grand jury subpoenas to associates of former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn. Monday, Flynn’s lawyers confirmed Flynn would plead the Fifth in response to the Senate Intelligence Committee’s subpoenas.

May 10, Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov and Ambassador Sergei Kislyak visited The White House. (Flynn was canned for misleading Pence about his Kislyak calls.) Outside, Lavrov jokingly feigned ignorance about the firing. American press was not allowed in. Russian News Agency TASS was. The White House failed to mention Kislyak.

“Trump told [Lavrov and Kislyak] that firing Comey, had relieved ‘great pressure’ on him,” reported The New York Times’ Matt Apuzzo, Maggie Haberman and Matthew Rosenberg Friday. “‘I just fired the head of the FBI. He was crazy, a real nut job,’ Trump said. ‘I faced great pressure because of Russia. That’s taken off.’”

The Washington Post then reported Trump revealed highly classified information about the Islamic State group.

“Subsequent reports suggested that the source of the intelligence was Israel but, crucially, did not allege that Trump had mentioned this fact to the Russians,” reported The Guardian’s David Smith Monday. “A journalist from the Bloomberg agency asked Israel’s prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, if he had any concerns about intelligence cooperation with the U.S. ... For his part, Trump said, ‘I never mentioned the word or the name “Israel.” Never mentioned during that conversation. They’re all saying I did, so you have another story wrong. Never mentioned the word “Israel.”””

The Israeli spy working inside the Islamic State was placed in immediate peril. “The sensitive intelligence was shared with the U.S., officials say, on the condition that the source remain confidential,” reported ABC News’ Brian Ross, James Gordon Meek and Randy Kreider May 16.

Who would share their secrets with us now?

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